

# The THOREAU SOCIETY BULLETIN

Number Seventeen

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## THE CABIN SITE, ONCE AGAIN

Roland Robbins' discovery of the site of Thoreau's Walden cabin continues in the news. Wishing to make even more certain, before the area was closed and paved, that he had actually discovered the foundations of the house, Mr. Robbins excavated even further on Labor Day week-end. This time, in the presence of a number of witnesses, he carefully moved the stones in the back end of the cairn and dug several new holes going down to a depth of as much as six feet. In the exact center of the site the stone foundation for the king-post was uncovered. Pieces of plaster, glass, nails, and even bits of pottery were found scattered all through the sand. Under the site of the door, a huge mass of plaster weighing several hundred pounds was uncovered. This was evidently some surplus plaster which Thoreau had discarded.

Even more significant than the above material was a whole group of stones discovered at the base of the cairn, right over the hut site. These stones were marked with various initials, names, and phrases, and dated 1878. An oft-repeated phrase was "Banner of Light." Carrying his research to the New England Deposit Library, Robbins discovered the files of a weekly journal of spiritualism, entitled "Banner of Light." In the issue of August 3, 1878, was a long paragraph describing a camp meeting on July 25, 1878 at Walden Pond and including the mention of the depositing of these very stones. Thus, since the cairn was started only six years before this date, this discovery discounts all rumors that the cairn was once in a different spot or that a refreshment stand once occupied the site.

Plans for the construction of a memorial continue apace. A large granite field stone from Thoreau's birthplace on Virginia Road has been chosen to mark the hearth site. Suggestions for an inscription for this stone would be welcomed and may be submitted to the secretary of our society. This inscription must be brief and to the point. In order that the inscription on the stone be permanent, the letters must be both large and cut deep; therefore, since the stone is small, the inscription must be as brief as possible and still contain all the essential information. The final decision as to the wording will be left to the memorial committee named in the July bulletin.

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Some months ago we hailed the spreading of our society to Holland. Later we found new members in Switzerland, Holland, and England. Now we sweep to still another continent, South America, and add Dr. J. Garate of Tandil, Argentina. Dr. Garate, incidentally, is engaged in the translation of WALDEN into Spanish.

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"A habit of shaping matter by hand, or the need to cope with nature, liberates the mind from facts by spurring the creative will to act upon them. Is not this in truth the main point of Thoreau's WALDEN, which we Americans keep reading and reprinting without taking to heart its emphatic lesson?"  
--Jacques Pargun in TEACHER IN AMERICA, p. 277.

THE THOREAU HOUSE IN BOSTON  
Not long ago we ran across a unique bit of Thoreauviana which we are reproducing here for you. It is taken from Edward G. Porter's RAMBLES IN OLD BOSTON, NEW ENGLAND (Boston, 1887).



"There is a small, dilapidated wooden house, with gambrel roof, on Prince Street (No. 57), which has been spared, as if by special indulgence, to the present time. A side view of it is given here because of its antiquity, and because it was the home of the Thoreau family. In 1727 it belonged to Richard Sherwin, who sold it to John Adams. Nathaniel Loring afterwards owned it, and then David Orrok, from whom it descended to the Thoreau sisters, Elizabeth, Jane, and Sarah, who sold it in 1825 to Isaac Dupre for one thousand dollars.

"The estate next above this (51-53) was William Copp's in 1728, and at a later period it became the residence of John Thoreau; but it has undergone so many changes that it would be difficult to recognize it. The old end on the street has now an entirely different facing, and the original angle of the roof has disappeared. The only external feature remaining as it was is the great west wall of brick, laid in the promiscuous bond, reaching far up the yard, and crowned by four chimneys, two of which belonged to the house in the rear, once owned by Captain Peter Papillon, whose entrance, like that of the Thoreaus, was on the narrow passage-way now called Bennet Avenue.

"John Thoreau, the grandfather of Henry the writer, came to Boston about 1773 from the island of Jersey, and established himself in business on Long Wharf. After his marriage he bought this house of the Orrok family, relatives of his wife, and lived in it until he removed to Concord in 1800. Here Henry's grandmother died in 1796, and here his father, John Thoreau, Jr., spent his boyhood. The estate remained in the family till quite recently. Miss Maria, the last of the Thoreaus, died at Bangor in 1881." (pp. 116-117)

Note: The special indulgence granted the house by fate expired soon after Mr. Porter wrote his book, for the house was torn down in the late nineteenth century and not a trace now remains, we understand.

## LIFE MEMBERSHIP

Since it is often remarked that one dollar a year seems a small fee for membership in the Thoreau Society, I would like to call attention once again to the fact that there is a "life membership" status for which the fee is a contribution of twenty-five dollars or more to the society. Our first life member was Mr. Charles Ives of West Redding, Conn. Since then we have added Mr. Roger Payne of New York City, Mrs. Gladys Hourwich of Stelton, New Jersey, and Mr. Porter Sargent of Boston, Mass.



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(Editor's Note: Since the question so frequently arises as to the relationship between the present-day Thoreaus in this country and the Thoreaus of Concord, it was voted at the July meeting to include this family tree, prepared by Raymond Adams, in our bulletin. For a further note on the Thoreau genealogy, may we once again suggest that you look up James Walker's letter on "The Ancestry of Thoreau" in the September 8, 1945 SATURDAY REVIEW OF LITERATURE. This letter tells further of the descendants of the younger Philippe Thoreau, including some now living in New Zealand and adds some new information as to the origin of the family.)

The name Thoreau is said to appear commonly in the records of Tours, France during the late middle ages, but then the name is out of the records until 1720, when it reappeared in the church records of the Isle of Jersey, in the parish of St. Helier, with the birth of Philippe Thoreau (1720-1800).

In 1749 Philippe Thoreau married Marie leGalais (1723-1801) and from them all Thoreaus since 1750 seem to be descended. Philippe and Marie Thoreau had nine children as follows: Mary, John, Ann, Elizabeth, Peter, Jeanne, Susan, Philippe, and Catherine. All of these children seem to have married, the six girls of course leaving no descendants by the name of Thoreau. An outline of the family history of the three sons follows:

John Thoreau (1754-1801) became a sailor and settled in Boston about 1773, had a family of five children, of whom one was a son, John Thoreau (1787-1859) the father of Henry D. Thoreau (1817-1862) the American author. Henry had two sisters and a brother, all of whom died unmarried, and so the John Thoreau line of descent from the first Philippe died out.

Peter Thoreau (1755-1810) had meanwhile settled in St. Helier, Jersey, and was married and had one daughter Elizabeth (I know nothing of her history) and one son, Peter Thoreau Jr. (1789-1867) This second Peter married three times but had no children until after his third marriage in 1853. However, after he was sixty-five years old, he had four children, at least one of whom was a son, who in 1896 was living in London. It should be noted that there were no children born into this branch of the Thoreau family between 1789 and 1854, hence Philip Thoreau of Denver (born in 1840) could not be of this branch.

Philippe Thoreau (?-?), the third son of the original Philippe and of Marie Thoreau seems to have left fewer records, though all present day Thoreaus about whom I know seem to be his descendants. He had a daughter and two sons, one of whom was probably the William Thoreau born in St. Helier in March, 1806. This William Thoreau had at least seven children: John W., Philip (the Denver merchant), Margaret (who married a Rive), Jane E., Mary, Ann, and Harriet E. Of William Thoreau's two sons, John W. Thoreau remained in Jersey, where his two sons, William and John Thoreau still live; Philip Thoreau became a sailor, settled first in Canada, then in Iowa, and finally in Denver, Colorado. This Philip Thoreau was born July 19, 1840, married his cousin Ann Touet and had seven children: Philip, Ann J., William Elias, Walter E., Lydia H., Julia Thoreau Suess, and John W. Thoreau--of whom the last is still living. Nine years after the death of his first wife, he married Jane Elizabeth Pierce. They had one child, Alice Thoreau Horte. There are many grandchildren. Philip died in 1904.

To sum up: The family of Philip Thoreau of Denver would seem to be second cousins once removed of Henry D. Thoreau of Concord, Mass., all descended from Philippe and Marie Thoreau, Henry being in the third generation through John, and Philip, in the third through Philippe. Philip of Denver was probably a second cousin of Henry of Concord.

Thoreau has long been notorious as a non-joiner. But there was one society of which he was proud to be a member, the Boston Society of Natural History. In 1830 he was elected a corresponding member of the society and through the remainder of his life he kept in close contact with their work. According to the present curator, he used to come over to Boston early in the morning before the society's doors were open and climb into a small room through a side window, spending hours in the library and among the natural history collections.

When Thoreau died in 1862, he willed to the society his natural history collections. The society still owns some of his specimens although they passed the greater part of his herbarium over to the Concord Free Public Library in the late nineteenth century and the Indian relics to the Peabody Museum at Harvard.

At the time of Thoreau's death, a eulogy was read before the society by Dr. C. T. Jackson and later printed in its proceedings. Since this has been little noticed, and so far as we can ascertain never reprinted, we are including it here through the kind permission of Miss Mary Cobb, librarian of the society.

Jackson, Dr. C. T. "Notice of the death of Mr. Thoreau." PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOSTON SOCIETY OF NATURAL HISTORY, IX (May 21, 1862), 70-72.

Henry D. Thoreau, of Concord, Mass., died, at the age of 44 years, of pulmonary consumption.

His grandfather was a French emigrant from the island of Guernsey, and settled in Concord. His father was well known as a manufacturer of black-lead pencils, an art which young Thoreau learned, but never practised as a business, his tastes leading him wholly into the field of science, while he abhorred trade.

Henry D. Thoreau was distinguished for the great accuracy of his observations, and for the thoroughness with which he executed every research upon which he entered. He was esteemed as an accurate land surveyor, the only business upon which he ever entered for pay. As a botanist he was highly esteemed by those who are the best judges of the subject.

As an observer of the habits of animals he was unrivalled. He would wait all day, if it was necessary, for a bird to approach him. He said their curiosity would bring them to examine him if he would remain quiet long enough; and he generally managed to make familiar acquaintance with all living creatures he met with in his rambles through the forest. Thoreau had a genuine love of nature, and pursued natural history for his own gratification, and not with any ambitious views. He was greatly troubled to find that anything had escaped the observation of eminent naturalists, and seemed to be surprised that anything should have been left by them for him to discover.

Thoreau was a man of original genius, and very peculiar in his views of society and the ways of life. He was conscientiously scrupulous, and was opposed to aiding or abetting, even by a poll-tax, measures which he did not approve of, and therefore got into trouble occasionally with the constituted authorities of the town, who could not indulge him in his opposition to a tax because any part of it might go to support the militia; so they twice shut him up in the jail, from whence his friends took him by paying his tax against his protest.

His published works are full of knowledge of the secrets of nature, and are enlivened by such quaint humor, and warmed with kindness towards all living beings. Those who knew Thoreau best loved and appreciated him most.

Dr. Jackson proposed the following resolutions, which were adopted:--





**Resolved,** That the Boston Society of Natural History has learned with profound regret the premature decease of their corresponding member, Henry D. Thoreau, of Concord, who was a most faithful and devoted student of nature, a keen and appreciating observer, whose researches, had longer life been granted him, promised important acquisitions to science.

**Resolved,** That a copy of this resolution be transmitted to the mother and sister of this eminent naturalist, with expressions of the warm sympathy of this Society in their great loss.

Dr. Jackson announced the donation of Mr. Thoreau's collections to the Society. These consisted of

1. His collection of New England pressed plants, numbering more than one thousand species, arranged by himself, together with those western plants collected in his journey of 1861.

2. His collection of birds' eggs and nests, carefully identified by himself, composed of New England species.

3. The collection of Indian antiquities, consisting of stone implements and weapons (chiefly) found by himself in Concord.

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#### BOOK REVIEWS

Kane, Henry Bugbee. **THOREAU'S WALDEN: A PHOTOGRAPHIC REGISTER.** New York: Knopf, 1946. 169pp. \$4.00

Thoreau has been most fortunate in his illustrators. With the most photogenic style in American literature, he has consistently attracted the attention of the best of the artistic world. Edward Steichen, Eric Fitch Daglish, Rudolph Ruzicka, Thomas Nason, and N.C. Wyeth have each rendered their tribute. Foremost of all perhaps is the photography of Herbert W. Gleason who devoted an entire lifetime to depicting the Thoreau Country. Now Henry Kane, well known as an illustrator of nature books for children, has turned his attention towards Walden Pond.

We are however sorry to say that this volume does not live up to our expectations. It is without question a beautiful volume. It will grace many a parlor table for an evening's diversion. The photographs of the fauna of the Concord area, for example, are unsurpassed. But it adds little to the understanding of Thoreau's great classic. A Concord friend expressed it well when he said to me, "Too often I felt that Kane took his photographs and then searched WALDEN for a caption to fit it, rather than searching with his camera to illustrate the book." We cannot agree with Kane that a photograph of a brook, no matter how lovely, is suitable to illustrate "Time is but the stream I go a-fishing in." There are deeper meanings to the sentence than a picture of rippling water.

We feel too that Mr. Kane's choice of title is unfortunate. The whole text of WALDEN is by no means included in the book. It is simply eighty-odd brief quotations, each illustrated with a full-page photograph. But still look up the volume at your bookseller's. Photographs may mean more to you than to your secretary.

Ishill, Joseph & others. **THOREAU: "THE COSMIC YANKEE": CENTENNIAL APPRECIATIONS.** Los Angeles: Rucker Publications Committee, 1946. 40pp. 50¢

This is a symposium on the significance of Thoreau's philosophy today from the libertarian point of view. It contains eleven brief essays and a foreword by Dr. Frederick W. Reiman: "Thoreau: 'The Cosmic Yankee': (With Gleanings from his Writings)" by Joseph Ishill; "Thoreau, Apostle of Freedom Through Simplification" by Fyria Hopkins; "Location on Thoreau" by Edward Howard Briggs; "Thoughts on the Thoreau Centennial" by Jo Ann Wheeler; "Thoreau and Modern Education" by Alexis C. Fern; "One Hundred Years After Thoreau" by Paul E. Hunt; "Thoreau the Freethinker and Lover of Liberty" by Sadie L. Cook; "Thoreau's Man in Society" by Arthur E.

Briggs; "Thoreau the Libertarian" by Roger N. Baldwin; "The Gospel According to Henry David Thoreau" by Doreen Antoinette Tucker; and "Thoreau: Pioneer for Freedom" by Walter Harding.

Since one of my own essays has been included in the volume, I can hardly give an unprejudiced review. It unquestionably has its failings. As in so many symposiums, there is a great deal of repetition of material. Too often the writers fail to delve much below the surface. But on the whole, the volume is significant as an indication of the growing concern for Thoreau as a thinker and social critic as well as a nature writer. Dr. Briggs' analysis of many of the so-called paradoxes of Thoreau's social philosophy is by far the most penetrating; Miss Wheeler's plea for Thoreauvian individualism today, the most challenging. I am greatly tempted to quote from a number of the essays, but the ideas are far better understood in their context and I can only urge you to read them there.

Copies of this booklet may be obtained for fifty cents each from the Rucker Publications Committee, 2101 S. Grammercy Place, Los Angeles 7, California.

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Several years ago Louis Mayer of Hopewell Junction, New York made a bust of Thoreau and presented it to the Free Public Library in Concord as his personal tribute to the Sage of Walden Pond. Thinking that the members of the society who were not able to get to Concord might be interested in this new bust, we wrote to Mr. Mayer asking for a sketch or photograph of the bust. He responded with the pen drawing above and a note saying, "Technically it is not all I would like it to be. My eyes are no longer equal to pen work. Mr. Mayer, we discovered, is 70 1/2, but I hope I've suggested in this drawing not only the ruggedness... but in equal manner the mentality of Thoreau." We may consider this then not as an attempt at a photographic likeness of H.D.T., but rather as an attempt to capture his spirit.

Mr. Mayer has presented a cut of his drawing to the society and we will gladly arrange to run off special impressions for those who are interested in obtaining a copy suitable for framing.





# ADDITIONS TO THE THOREAU BIBLIOGRAPHY

- anon. "Camp Meeting at Walden in 1878." CONCORD JOURNAL. September 12, 1946. Reprinting an article from BANNER OF LIGHT, a weekly journal of spiritualism, for Aug. 3, 1878 giving an account of an early pilgrimage to the cairn.
- . "Benzasheid Als Experiment" ("Solitude as an Experiment"). DE GROENE AMSTERDAMMER. Aug. 31 & Sept. 7, 1946. Two long articles in Dutch on Thoreau, quoting long fragments from WALDEN.
- . "In Commemoration Thoreau Society." BOSTON HERALD. July 14, 1946. An account of the annual meeting.
- . "Path to Thoreau's Door Grows Wider." CHICAGO TRIBUNE. Aug. 11, 1946. An interview with Edwin W. Teale on the present popularity of HMT.
- . "Work on Thoreau Site Yields New Proofs." CONCORD JOURNAL. Sept. 5, 1946. An account of further excavations by Mr. Robins.
- Ballou, Adin. "Mountainside Dawn." NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE. Aug. 17, 1946. Another "After Reading Thoreau" sonnet.
- Bevington, Helen. "Return from Summer." NEW YORKER. Sept. 14, 1946. A short poem on Thoreau's preoccupation with the sound of his footsteps.
- Bode, Carl. "Thoreau Finds a House." SAT. REV. OF LIT. July 20, 1946. Annotating a hitherto unpublished letter from Thoreau to Ricketson.
- . "Thoreau's Last Letter." NEW ENGLAND QUARTERLY, XIX (June, 1946), 244. Another previously unpublished letter, this one to his publishers Ticknor & Fields is later than any other known letter.
- Callahan, James L. "Lake Walden's Rooted Trailers." BOSTON GLOBE. Sept. 15, 1946. Photographs of the trailer camp at the pond.
- Cuneo, Dardo. "Thoreau y la Desobediencia." LA VANGUARDIA (Buenos Aires). (Date unknown). A brief article on the influence of "Civil Disobedience."
- Ford, Nick Aaron. "Henry David Thoreau, Abolitionist." NEW ENGLAND QUARTERLY, XIX (Sept. 1946), 359-371. Shows that Thoreau sympathized with the Abolitionists even though he never officially joined their ranks.
- Franco, Luis. "Hudson y Thoreau." ARGENTINA LIBRE. Aug. 7, 1941. An essay, later reprinted in REPORTEO AMERICANO (Date unknown).
- Hurtado, Leopoldo. "Thoreau en Walden." LA PRENSA (Buenos Aires). Sept. 16, 1945. A lengthy illustrated essay.
- . "Vida de Henry David Thoreau." NOSOTROS (Buenos Aires), V (July, 1940), 20-49. A long article on Thoreau's life.
- Iams, Jack. PROPHET BY EXPERIENCE. New York: Armed Services Inc., 1943. 351pp. A special Overseas Edition, printed for the armed forces, of this clever Thoreauvian satire. Can anyone tell us of a similar edition of WALDEN?
- Ishill, Joseph & others. THOREAU: "THE COSMIC YANKEE": CENTENNIAL APPRECIATIONS. Los Angeles: Rucker Publications Committee, 1946. 40pp. See review in this bulletin.
- Kane, Henry Bugbee. THOREAU'S WALDEN: A PHOTOGRAPHIC REGISTER. New York: Knopf, 1946. 169pp. See review in this issue. Other reviews: CHICAGO TRIBUNE, Aug. 25, 1946; NEW YORK SUN, Aug. 23, 1946.
- Morris, Charles R. AN ESSENTIAL VOCABULARY FOR THE READING OF "WALDEN," BY HENRY D. THOREAU. Milton, Mass.: Charles R. Morris, 1946. 9pp. A study of Thoreau's word usage for students. Mr. Morris will send a copy of this pamphlet to any member of our society writing him. Address him in care of Milton Academy, Milton, Mass.
- Parr, W. Holton. "Communication." CONCORD JOURNAL. Sept. 5, 1946. A letter to the editor complaining about the lack of markers for the Walden hut site: a problem our society should take up at the first opportunity.
- Russo, Louis. "Summer at 'Blue-Eyed' Walden." BOSTON GLOBE. Aug. 18, 1946. Photographs of the swimming beach at Walden.

- Stern, Madeline B. "Approaches to Biography." SOUTH ATLANTIC QUARTERLY, XLV (July, 1946), 362-371. A study of the types of biography with Thoreau used as the example throughout.
- Teale, Edwin Way. "Nature in Action: Henry Thoreau's Pond Essentially the Same." NEWARK (NJ) STAR-LEDGER. July 15, 1946. A syndicated column.
- Thoreau, Henry David. WALDEN o LA VIDA EN LOS BOSQUES. Buenos Aires: Emecé Editores, S.A., N.D. 329pp. An Argentinian edition of WALDEN.
- Thorovian. "Questions Raised." CONCORD JOURNAL. Sept. 12, 1946. Questioning the recently discovered hut site.
- Weygandt, Cornelius. ON THE EDGE OF EVENING: THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A TEACHER AND WRITER WHO HOLDS TO THE OLD WAYS. New York: Putnam, 1946. 217pp \$3.00. This quite charming, conversational autobiography of a University of Pennsylvania English professor is filled with such tributes to Thoreau as, "The man and his writing are seldom long out of mind with me," or, "I conned over A WEEK and WALDEN and fairly devoured his journals." The quiet, friendly spirit of the book will delight many; its dry humor, even more. It is unfortunate that the captions under the photographs opposite Page 132 have become interchanged, labeling Thoreau "Henry Reed" and vice versa.
- Worthington, John W. "Thoreau's Route to Katahdin" APPALACHIA. June, 1946. Pp.3-14. With illustrations and map.

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We are enclosing as a supplement to this bulletin an offset reproduction of Samuel Arthur Jones' article on "Thoreau's Incarceration (As Told by his Jailer.)" from THE INLANDER of December, 1898 (IX, 96-103). THE INLANDER was an ephemeral publication brought out at Ann Arbor, Michigan and is now completely unobtainable except in the files of a few large libraries. Since it is the most nearly complete account of Thoreau's imprisonment ever to have reached print, we are reprinting it to commemorate the one hundredth anniversary of Thoreau's "civil disobedience" in July of 1846. The "Mr.S." of the article is of course Sam Staples.

This is the second in a series of reprints of memorable articles on Thoreau. The first, issued as a supplement to Bulletin #9, reprinted some "Reminiscences of Thoreau" by George William Curtis from the July, 1862 issue of HARPER'S. A few copies of this earlier reprint are still on hand and will be sent gratis to any member of the society requesting one.

In reply to many inquiries: Bulletins 10-16 are still in print and are available at 25¢ each. Extra copies of any current bulletin are 10¢ each. The supply of the early mimeographed bulletins is nearly exhausted, but there are a few numbers still on hand.

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The Thoreau Society is an informal organization of several hundred students and followers of the life and works of Henry David Thoreau. Membership is open to anyone interested. Fees are one dollar a year. This bulletin is issued occasionally, usually quarterly, by the secretary. All the material, unless otherwise assigned, is compiled and written by the secretary.

The officers of the society are Raymond Adams, Chapel Hill, N.C., president; Mrs. Caleb Wheeler, Concord, Mass., vice-president; and Walter Harding, Bridgewater, Mass., secretary-treasurer.

Once again, while you mutter at its vagaries, I must announce the change of my address. Since I am now working at the University of North Carolina, it will be--

Walter Harding  
English Department  
Chapel Hill, N.C.

